

socialist standard

March 2015
Vol. 111 No. 1327
£1.50

Journal of The Socialist Party of Great Britain - Companion Party of the World Socialist Movement

Everything wants to be free

(So end capitalism now)



Homelessness
and health
page 10



Water fuss
page 13



Dulwich Hamlet
F.C.
page 23

socialist standard

MARCH 2015
contents

FEATURES

Homelessness & health 10

Commercialising water in Ireland 13

Keeping it in the family 15

Why I wouldn't make a good MP 17

REGULARS

Pathfinders 4

Halo Halo! 6

Cooking the Books 7

Material World 8

Greasy Pole 9

Cooking the Books 18

Mixed Media 19

Reviews 20

Proper Gander 21

Meetings 22

50 Years Ago 23

Action Replay 23

Voice from the Back 24

Free Lunch 24

All original material is available under the Creative Commons Attribution-NoDerivs 2.0 UK: England & Wales (CC BY-ND 2.0 UK) licence.

The Socialist Party

52 Clapham High Street,
London SW4 7UN

Tel: 0207 622 3811

Email: spgb@worldsocialism.org

Website: www.worldsocialism.org/spgb

Blog: <http://socialismoryourmoneyback.blogspot.com/>

SUBSCRIPTION ORDERS

should be sent to the address above.

RATES: One year subscription (normal rate) £15. One year subscription (low/unwaged) £10. Europe rate £20 (Air mail). Rest of world £25 (Air mail). Voluntary supporters subscription £20 or more. Cheques payable to 'The Socialist Party of Great Britain'.

The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on **Saturday 4 April** at the address above. Correspondence should be sent to the General Secretary. All articles, letters and notices should be sent to the Editorial Committee.

Contact Details

SPGB Media: spgb.media@worldsocialism.org

UK BRANCHES & CONTACTS

LONDON

North London branch. Meets 3rd Thursday 8pm at Torriano Meeting House, 99 Torriano Ave, NW5 2RX

Contact: chris.dufton@talktalk.net or 020 7609 0983

South London branch. Meets 1st Tues. 7.00pm. Head Office. 52 Clapham High St, SW4 7UN. Tel: 020 7622 3811

West London branch. Meets 1st & 3rd Tues. 8pm. Chiswick Town Hall, Heathfield Terrace (corner Sutton Court Rd), W4. Corres: 51 Gayford Road, London W12 9BY. Tel: 020 8740 6677. Email: tenner@abelgratis.com

MIDLANDS

West Midlands Regional branch. Meets last Sunday of the month, 3.00pm, the Briar Rose pub, 25 Bennetts Hill, Birmingham B2 5RE. (Check before attending). E-Mail: vincent.otter@globalnet.co.uk. Tel: 01242 675357

NORTHEAST

Northeast branch. Contact: Vin Maratty, 22 Greystoke Avenue, Sunderland, Tyne and Wear, SR2 9DS, tel: 01915 250 002. Email: vinmaratty@googlemail.com.

NORTHWEST

Lancaster branch. Meets fortnightly 8.30pm. P. Shannon, 10 Green Street, Lancaster LA1 1DZ. Tel: 01524 382380 Email: spgb.lancaster@worldsocialism.org

Manchester branch. Paul Bennett, 6 Burleigh Mews, Hardy Lane, M21 7LB. Tel: 0161 860 7189

Bolton. Tel: H. McLaughlin. 01204 844589

Cumbria. Brendan Cummings, 19 Queen St, Millom, Cumbria LA18 4BG

Carlisle. Robert Whitfield. Email: robdotbob@gmail.com Tel: 07906 373975

Rochdale. Tel: R. Chadwick. 01706 522365

South East Manchester. Enquiries: Blanche Preston, 68 Fountains Road, M32 9PH

YORKSHIRE

Yorkshire Regional Branch: Richard Rainferd, tel: 01484 327468 richardrainferd@gmail.com

SOUTH/SOUTHEAST/SOUTHWEST

Kent and Sussex Regional branch. Meets second Sunday every month at 2.00pm at The Muggleton Inn, High Street, Maidstone ME14 1HJ.

Email: spgb.ksrb@worldsocialism.org Tel: 07973 142701.

South West Regional branch. Meets 2nd Saturday of each month in the Railway Tavern, Salisbury, 2.00pm (check before attending). Shane Roberts, 86 High Street, Bristol BS5 6DN. Tel: 0117 9511199

Canterbury. Rob Cox, 4 Stanhope Road, Deal, Kent, CT14 6AB

Luton. Nick White, 59 Heywood Drive, LU2 7LP

Redruth. Harry Sowden, 5 Clarence Villas, Redruth, Cornwall, TR15 1PB. Tel: 01209 219293

EAST ANGLIA

East Anglian Regional branch. Meets every two months on a Saturday afternoon (see meetings page for details).

Pat Deutz, 11 The Links, Billericay, CM12 0EX. n.deutz@btinternet.com

David Porter, Eastholme, Bush Drive, Eccles-on-Sea, NR12 0SF.

Tel: 01692 582533.

Richard Headicar, 42 Woodcote, Firs Rd, Hethersett, NR9 3JD. Tel: 01603 814343.

Cambridge. Andrew Westley, 10 Marksby Close, Duxford, Cambridge CB2 4RS. Tel: 07890343044

IRELAND

Cork: Kevin Cronin, 5 Curragh Woods,

Frankfield, Cork. Tel: 021 4896427. Email: mariekev@eircom.net

Newtownabbey: Nigel McCullough. Tel: 028 90852062.

SCOTLAND

Edinburgh branch. Meets 1st Thur. 7.00-9.00pm. The Quaker Hall, Victoria Terrace (above Victoria Street), Edinburgh.

J. Moir. Tel: 0131 440 0995.

JIMMY@jimmy29.freemove.co.uk Branch website:

<http://geocities.com/edinburghbranch/>

Glasgow branch. Meets 3rd Wednesday of each month at 8pm in Community Central Halls, 304 Maryhill Road, Glasgow. Peter Hendrie, 75 Lairhills Road, East Kilbride, Glasgow G75 0LH. Tel: 01355 903105. Email: peter.anna.hendrie@blueyonder.co.uk.

Dundee. Ian Ratcliffe, 12 Finlow Terrace Dundee, DD4 9NA, Tel 01382 698297

Kilmarnock. Meets last Thursday of month 7pm-9pm at the Wheatsheaf pub (about 2 minutes from bus station). Paul Edwards. Tel: 01563 541138. Email: rainbow3@btopenworld.com

Lothian Socialist Discussion @Autonomous Centre Edinburgh, ACE, 17 West Montgomery Place, Edinburgh EH7 5HA. Meets 4th Wednesday of each month 7.30-9.00pm. Tel: F.Anderson 07724 082753.

WALES

Swansea branch. Meets 2nd Mon, 7.30pm, Unitarian Church, High Street. Corres:

Geoffrey Williams, 19 Baptist Well Street, Waun Wen, Swansea SA1 6FB.

Tel: 01792 643624

Cardiff and District. Corres: Richard Botterill, 21 Pen-Y-Bryn Rd, Gabalfa, Cardiff, CF14 3LG. Tel: 02920-615826 Email: botterillr@gmail.com

Llandudno

Contact: Gareth Whitley - Email: gwhitley@hotmail.co.uk

INTERNATIONAL CONTACTS

Latin America. J.M. Morel, Calle 7 edif 45 apto 102, Multis nuevo La loteria, La Vega, Rep. Dominicana.

AFRICA

Kenya. Patrick Ndege, PO Box 78105, Nairobi.

Swaziland. Mandla Ntshakala, PO Box 981, Manzini.

Zambia. Kephass Mulenga, PO Box 280168, Kitwe.

ASIA

Japan. Michael. Email: japan.wsm@gmail.com

AUSTRALIA

Trevor Clarke, wspa.info@yahoo.com.au

EUROPE

Denmark. Graham Taylor, Kjaerslund 9, floor 2 (middle), DK-8260 Viby J

Germany. Norbert.

E-mail: weltsozialismus@gmx.net

Norway. Robert Stafford.

Email: hallblithe@yahoo.com

Italy. Gian Maria Freddi, Via Felice Casorati n. 6A, 37131 Verona

Spain. Alberto Gordillo, Avenida del Parque 2/2/3 Puerta A, 13200 Manzanares.

COMPANION PARTIES OVERSEAS

Socialist Party of Canada/Parti Socialiste du Canada. Box 4280, Victoria B.C. V8X 3X8 Canada. Email: SPC@iname.com

World Socialist Party (India) 257 Baghajatin 'E' Block (East), Kolkata - 700086, Tel: 033-2425-0208, Email: wspindia@hotmail.com

World Socialist Party (New Zealand) P.O. Box 1929, Auckland, NI, New Zealand.

World Socialist Party of the United States P.O. Box 440247, Boston, MA 02144 USA. Email: boston@wspus.org

Introducing The Socialist Party

The Socialist Party is like no other political party in Britain. It is made up of people who have joined together because we want to get rid of the profit system and establish real socialism. Our aim is to persuade others to become socialist and act for themselves, organising democratically and without leaders, to bring about the kind of society that we are advocating in this journal. We are solely concerned with building a movement of socialists for socialism. We are not a reformist party with a programme of policies to patch up capitalism.

We use every possible opportunity

to make new socialists. We publish pamphlets and books, as well as CDs, DVDs and various other informative material. We also give talks and take part in debates; attend rallies, meetings and demos; run educational conferences; host internet discussion forums, make films presenting our ideas, and contest elections when practical. Socialist literature is available in Arabic, Bengali, Dutch, Esperanto, French, German, Italian, Polish, Spanish, Swedish and Turkish as well as English.

The more of you who join The Socialist Party the more we will be able to get our

ideas across, the more experiences we will be able to draw on and greater will be the new ideas for building the movement which you will be able to bring us.

The Socialist Party is an organisation of equals. There is no leader and there are no followers. So, if you are going to join we want you to be sure that you agree fully with what we stand for and that we are satisfied that you understand the case for socialism.

If you would like more details about The Socialist Party, complete and return the form on page 23.



socialist standard

MARCH 2015

Editorial

A free lunch, anyone?

'IT'S A free country, isn't it?' So we sometimes say, and sometimes believe. And it is true that the British state permits a relatively high degree of freedom of action and of thought. To some, such relative freedoms are a source of patriotic pride; to socialists, they are a cynical reminder of the freedoms we do not have. It depends on what we think freedom is, what we believe we are entitled to as human beings, and how we want to live.

One particular freedom is denied us everywhere within our capitalist world, and that is the freedom to obtain the things we need if we do not have the money to pay for them. 'Things don't grow on trees' we are told as children, unschooled as yet in the rules of our society. Very quickly we come to understand that 'free offers' are not really free, that someone is paying for them, and it is probably us. And by the time we are worldly-wise we know that 'there is no such thing as a free lunch', and when someone offers us something for nothing, we turn suspicious, and wonder what they want in return.

Exchange is so ubiquitous within our world of capitalism that it has come to seem an inevitable and indispensable thing, a part of human nature. Adam Smith thought so in 1776 when he wrote of man's natural propensity to 'truck, barter and exchange'. Yet even within capitalism, exchange is not universal. We share within our families, giving without expectation of return. Online communities increasingly share software and information, while sites like 'Freecycle'

facilitate the free circulation of goods. We give freely to charities. We give because we like giving. And our giving, though it is constrained by capitalism, is perfectly normal for us. In communities of homeless people, such as 'cardboard city' that grew up in London's Southbank in the 1980s, it has been noted that goods obtained by individuals are often freely shared - not bartered or exchanged as we might suppose. When natural disasters strike and we are liberated from the social rules that bind us, people invariably and spontaneously resort to sharing, giving and receiving freely, making sure that goods go to those most in need of them. Sharing is not only a workable system of relating to one another, but a far more efficient and liberating way to meet the needs of the community.

Giving and getting for free may seem strange or unusual to us with our ingrained habits of thought, and may provoke all kind of anxieties about our ability to meet our needs. It shouldn't. Our systems of property, ownership and exchange are of very recent origin. Our earliest societies were all sharing communities, not only giving and receiving for free, but ensuring everyone had what they needed.

The huge inequalities of wealth in our capitalist societies, the curtailment of our freedoms and the vast conflicts of competing interests all have their origins in those uniquely human inventions: private property and exchange. We do not need them. It's time to offer ourselves a free lunch.

Capitalism in its element

REMEMBER HOW boring chemistry lessons were at school? To most kids there is something deeply unsexy about learning the properties of the elements, especially if, as is not uncommon in school, the deeper logic of it all has somehow passed them by. This is a shame, because elements are very curious things, with quite unique 'personalities'. Some are snooty and aloof, never deigning to notice anyone else. Some are content, rarely getting worked up over anything, little interested in being a team player or going out on dates. Some are looking for that special someone while others can't stand being alone and will run off with just about anybody. Some of these will fizz and pop in your sink. Some will take out your sink. One or two could take out your kitchen.

Still, you could easily get through the rest of your life successfully without knowing much about the Periodic Table, even after watching *Breaking Bad*. You probably know that iron is the only metal that rusts, that copper is the best conductor (actually silver is better), that lead and mercury are bad for you, that helium makes your voice squeak, that aluminium is used for saucepans (and might be associated with Alzheimers Disease). You probably *don't* know that arsenic was once known as 'inheritance powder' because it was untraceable and therefore the poison of choice for ruthless heirs in a hurry to collect. Or that chemistry students like playing 'disappearing coffee spoon' jokes on each other using spoons made of gallium, which melts instantly in your hand or in your coffee. It's not toxic, but just for laughs it turns your skin brown (*The Periodic Table*, Paul Parsons & Gail Dixon, Quercus, 2013).

Elements are able to change into other elements, often by natural processes, a fact which fascinated alchemists. When you combine some elements, you don't just get the sum of their properties added together, you often get completely new and different properties not present in the originals. This oddity lay behind the prehistoric technological revolution of the Bronze Age. Copper and tin are both soft metals. Neither is any good for making edged weapons. But someone must have discovered, by accident presumably, that melting them together creates an alloy – bronze – which is much harder than either, and makes a good sword. It becomes harder still if you throw in some 'inheritance powder'.

The dull subject of chemistry is of course behind most of the technological revolutions of the past century, as more properties and combinations have been discovered. It's also behind a lot of the politics of capitalism. Think gold. Think carbon. Think cobalt, a 'conflict element' used in gas turbines and jet engines, and mined in the 'Democratic' Republic of Congo. Think phosphorus, used globally in fertilisers, which aside from causing run-off resulting in dead fish and huge and revolting algal blooms, is virtually monopolised by Morocco, which invaded Western Sahara for more of the stuff, causing a war (*BBC Online*, 8 November 2013).

Not so long ago we were just using the basic, well-known elements, though even these came with interesting properties that are still being developed. Aluminium oxide produces sapphire crystals, industrially grown to the size of buckets and now made into bullet-proof glass for VIP limousines. And that's nothing compared to the cornucopia of elements that goes into a smart phone. As Andy Ridgway eloquently puts it, 'like Michelin-starred chefs, we are combining this material menu in increasingly exotic ways' (*New Scientist*, 14 February).

The problem is getting reliable supplies in a world of

competing economic blocs hell-bent on screwing each other over. In 2011 there was a global panic when China, producer of around 90 percent of rare-earth metals, decided to cut exports by forty percent. Prices, predictably, went through the roof, and doom-merchants everywhere bewailed the imminent collapse of civilisation.

What actually happened was that the crisis went away by itself – solved by capitalism's adaptive way of working. Rare-earth elements are only rare in relation to abundant elements, but not in absolute terms. China held a monopoly only because they were the cheapest producers and other countries had shut down their mining operations. Once China cut the supply, new mines, or old ones recommissioned, magically opened up in places like California and Greenland as investors saw a profit to be made. In fact over 200 mining companies got in on the act with the result that rare-earth elements are not only not rare anymore, the price is in danger of collapsing just like it did with oil, and the mining companies are now struggling to extract a decent return.

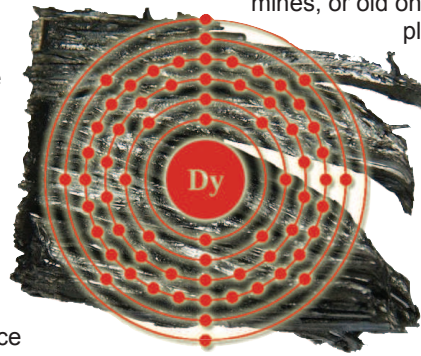
For socialists this is interesting because it demonstrates something we are always pointing out, that capitalism is not likely to collapse of its own accord, because it has a knack of working around problems. It's not just supply that adapts. Manufacturers needing rare elements and facing high prices for them soon figured out solutions that designed out those particular elements.

A peculiar aspect of the recycling industry, pointed out by Ridgway, is that as recycling increases, these same rare elements may become rare again. Many elements are found together in the same ores, meaning that when demand for the cost-bearing element declines through recycling, the other 'freebie' elements don't get extracted. Worse, they often can't be recycled because they are used in such tiny amounts that they are not economic to reclaim. Worse still, they are often blended together in alloys like a baked cake from which the ingredients cannot feasibly be re-extracted.

What is more worrying is that rare elements tend to involve more pollution both at the extraction end and the disposal end than other elements. In the West, most electronic devices are not recycled but left to gather dust as new models come out, or they're dumped. Even when electronic waste is collected as per regulation, that's not the end of the story. As *New Scientist's* editorial points out, 'Interpol estimates that one in three shipping containers leaving Europe is packed with e-waste destined for illegal dumping in the developing world. This results in major health hazards to people doing the dirty work of recycling' (14 February).

It's easy for anti-capitalists, and socialists too, to get into the habit of seeing the worst in every single thing that goes wrong, forgetting that capitalism is quite good at getting itself out of a lot of scrapes. But at what cost to humans, in the long run? Four million people died in Congo's civil war, which was largely about control of valuable rare elements destined for use in our must-have gadgets. In wider terms, capitalism's exploitation of the Periodic Table involves a level of human exploitation that leaves nearly all of us impoverished and enslaved, while making just a handful of 'Nobles' the only winners. That's a problem that capitalism, by its very nature, has no solution for. Whatever short-term supply crises it might adapt its way out of, it can't transform its own nature and magically, in the way elements are able to do, change itself into a different system. For that you need not natural processes but large-scale human intervention.

PJS



Dysprosium - a rare-earth used in magnets for smart phone microphones, wind turbines and electric cars.

Timeless Leninism?

Dear Editors

I think a careful reading of my document and of my biography of Tony Cliff would respond adequately to all your points ('Where Leadership Leads', February *Socialist Standard*). Indeed your author seems to have been rather careless in checking his facts - *What is to be Done?* was published in 1902 not 1903; much more seriously, your author simply disregards the arguments developed not only by Cliff, but by Hal Draper, Pierre Broué, Lars T Lih and many others about the place of *What Is to be Done?* in Lenin's work, and whether it can be considered as a timeless statement of 'Leninism'. Likewise the IS did not adopt the slate system until 1975, which rather undermines the claim that it is a central tenet of Leninism. As for 'what we've been saying for over 100 years', that may well be true, but with what results? It is easy enough to point to the limited achievements of the Leninist left, but since your own achievements are equally thin on the ground, a more modest tone might be called for.

IAN BIRCHALL.

Reply:

We are aware that there is a school of historical revisionists who try

to argue that Lenin was merely a leftwing Social Democrat. This may well be how he appeared when he participated in discussions within the Second International, but inside Russia he never gave up the idea that the revolution there would have to be led by a vanguard party of full-time revolutionaries organised on the lines he had outlined in his 1902 pamphlet and which had shocked other revolutionaries at the time such as Rosa Luxemburg and even Trotsky.

That he still held this view to the end can be seen from his other notorious pamphlet, *Leftwing Communism: An Infantile Disorder*, that came out in 1920. In chapter II, headed 'One of the Basic Prerequisites for the Success of the Bolsheviks', he wrote repeatedly about 'absolute centralisation' and 'iron discipline' and attributed the Bolsheviks' success to this. He still clearly thought in terms of a centralised and disciplined vanguard party 'leading and attracting the backward masses.' The chapter can be read on the internet here: www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1920/lwc/ch02.htm

There is also the fact that, historically, all parties and groups descended from the Bolshevik Party under Lenin, Trotskyist as well as Stalinist, have been organised as

vanguard parties along the lines of his 1902 pamphlet. Frankly, we cannot understand how anyone can seriously argue that Lenin did not advocate a centralised and highly disciplined party of full-time revolutionaries. —Editors.

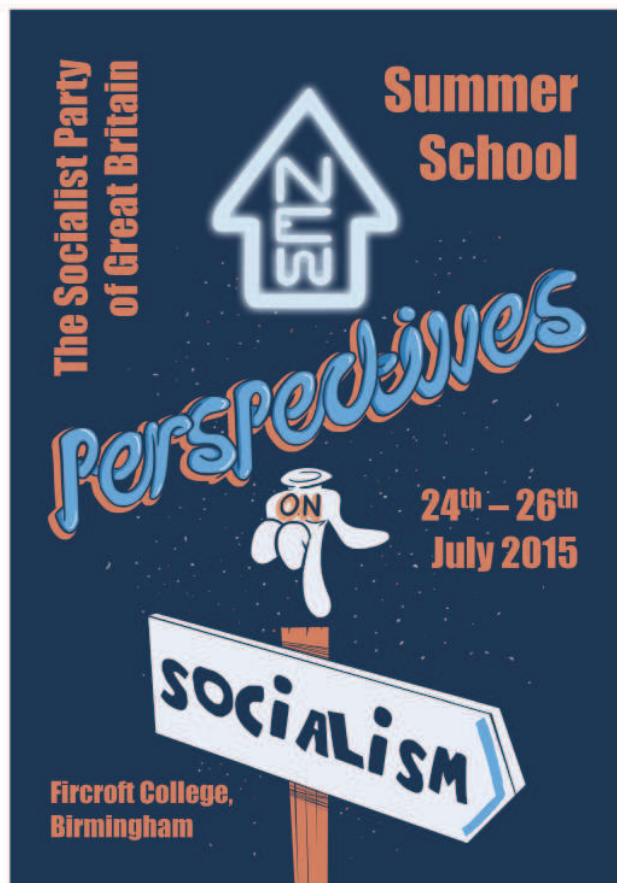
More on Syriza

Dear Editors

I agree with the article written on page 10 of February *Socialist Standard* about Syriza. But Syriza is not simply a coalition of various left and green, etc. There are also various splits from the socialist party (like the Labour in England) and more important inside Syriza the most solid ideologically group are the one of the ex-eurocommunist party of Greece that gave also to Syriza the ideological guidelines in a eurocommunist way like the 70s. The thinktank of Syriza is called 'Nikos Poulantzas' (<http://marxisttheory.org/poulantzas-eurocommunism>). If somebody is sect-maniac I can send you a list of the groups that consist Syriza!

Anyway I think the next thing to be analyzed is why Syriza collaborated with a populist party to rule the country, but this is strictly a Greek peculiarity...

THEODORE DESPONIS, Greece.



The principles of revolutionary socialism were formed over a hundred years ago. Then, capitalist growth was being fuelled by the technological and logistical developments following the Industrial Revolution. Since then, the history of capitalism has been marked by economic peaks and troughs, two World Wars, the rise and fall of state capitalism, massive advances in science, and widespread shifts in culture and beliefs. The Socialist Party of Great Britain argues that its original principles are still valid despite all these changes. This is because the basic structure of capitalism persists, regardless of differences in the way it is organised.

But is this right? Has society changed so much that class structure and the role of the state are significantly different now compared to previous centuries? What effects have these changes had on class consciousness and the likelihood of revolution? And how should revolutionary socialists respond through their theory and activity? It's always healthy to re-examine our beliefs, to see if they still apply to our ever-changing world. This weekend of talks and discussion will be an opportunity to take a fresh look at several important aspects of the socialist viewpoint.

Full residential cost (including accommodation and meals Friday evening to Sunday afternoon) is £80. The concessionary rate is £40. Day visitors are welcome, but please book in advance.

To book a place, send a cheque (payable to the Socialist Party of Great Britain) to Summer School, Sutton Farm, Aldborough, Boroughbridge, York, YO51 9ER, or book online through the QR code or at <http://spgb.net/summerschool2015>. E-mail enquiries to spgbschool@yahoo.co.uk



A Capitalist Tax Scam? Good Lord

JUST AS the deadline for articles for the *Standard* looms and we start to panic, realising there is nothing newsworthy on the religious front to write about – it's been over a week since the last human sacrifice to Allah, and we've not had a decent miracle from Jesus for ages, we remember the golden rule: have faith and the Lord will provide.

And he has done. The good Lord whom we have to thank for this month's article is Lord Stephen Green. The Reverend Lord Green of Hurstpierpoint in fact who as well as being a C of E vicar, a Tory member of the House of Lords, current Minister of State for Trade and Investment, Chairman of the HSBC group from 2006 to 2010, and former chair of HSBC's private bank in Switzerland whose clients included arms dealers, diamond smugglers and drugs runners, and which is now being investigated for tax irregularities in numerous countries, and who has inconveniently found himself at the centre of the scandal. And, oh yes, he's also the author of a book on morality.

There's nothing new about those who want to ram their morality down our throats finding themselves up to their dog collars in financial irregularities of course. Before the Rev Lord Green hit the headlines we had the Rev Paul Flowers, the drug-fuelled 'crystal Methodist', who also allegedly had an expensive weakness for rent-boys (one claimed Flowers 'paid him £500 per night but still owes £1,000') and who almost brought the Co-op bank to its knees.

On a lighter note, there was also a group of C of E vicars some years ago who, although they had complete faith in god, obviously didn't altogether trust him as an employer and decided they needed the protection of a Trade Union. The one they joined was MSF, whose initials stood for 'Manufacturing, Science and Finance'. We were pleased to see our fellow workers getting themselves unionised, but puzzled at their chosen union and wrote to the Archbishop of Canterbury at the time asking if, as their employment had nothing to do with

manufacturing or science, could we assume the main interest was finance. We didn't get a reply.

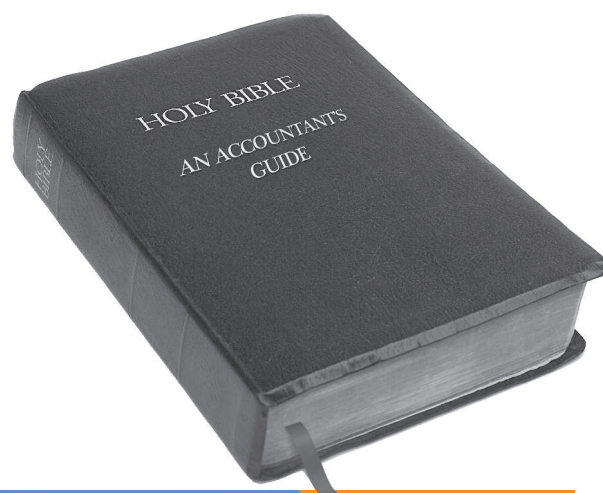
But back to the Rev Lord Green's book on morality – *Good Value: Reflections on Money, Morality and an Uncertain World*. Here, for the benefit of any *Socialist Standard* readers wishing to be guided by the Rev Lord Green's words of wisdom are a few extracts to steer you through any moral dilemmas you may have in managing your finances.

'There will always be those who have not merely more than others' he informs us. Some will have 'more than they could conceivably need.' And we can simply 'shrug our shoulders', or 'we can hear the still, small voice of conscience'. This 'reminds us – if we listen – that something is owed by the affluent. And a debt not paid is a debtor who is guilty'.

'As individuals' he assures us 'we do not govern our behaviour simply by what is allowed by law or regulation. We have our own codes of conduct, and hold ourselves accountable'. And where in big companies does this responsibility begin? 'With their boards, of course. There is no other task they have which is more important' the former HSBC chairman assures us.

With such honesty and wisdom as this from our moral superiors how can we, or indeed, the banking system and the capitalists running the show possibly go wrong?

NW



SUBSCRIPTION OFFER

WORTH
£9.95

FREE

SOCIALISM OR YOUR MONEY BACK

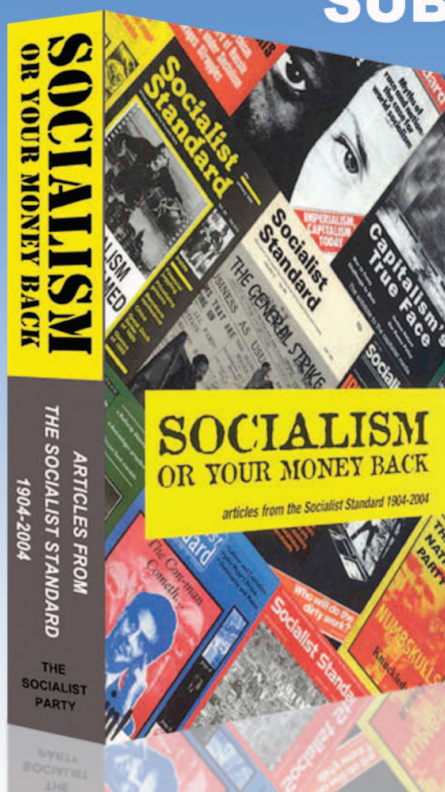
Articles from the *Socialist Standard* 1904 - 2004. A running commentary of 100 years of capitalist history by a socialist journal.

■ Two World Wars ■ The Russian Revolution ■ The Rise of Hitler
■ The Spanish Civil War ■ Hiroshima ■ The Silicon Chip ■ Pop Music
...and much more

WHEN YOU SUBSCRIBE TO
the **socialist standard**

This collection will revive a jaundiced spirit... Every home should have one.

THE INDEPENDENT





This 'anti-business' business

IT'S QUITE amusing really. The Labour Party has long since given up any opposition to capitalism and its profit-making and merely offers itself as an alternative manager of the capitalist state and economy in Britain.

Yet some capitalists and their mouthpieces in the media don't believe them – or feign not to – and accuse Labour of being 'anti-business'. Labour politicians protest. And grovel, the worst example to date being the historian Tristram Hunt, their spokesperson on education, who wrote a rather disparaging biography of Engels. Under the headline 'We're furiously pro-business, Labour MP tells private sector', the *Times* (9 February) reported him as saying.

'I'm enormously enthusiastic about businessmen and women making money, delivering shareholder return, about making profit' (*Times*, 9 January).

There is a certain logic in this position. If you accept capitalism and that productive activity under it is driven by the need for firms to make a profit, then you have to accept that they should, and not do anything that might discourage or endanger this. Otherwise you will provoke an economic downturn.

Writing on this issue in the *Times* (5 February) their financial editor, Patrick Hosking, claimed:

'It has taken decades to establish an enterprise culture in Britain. There are now only small pockets in Britain that refuse to acknowledge that profits are a good thing.'

This may well be the case since most people, unfortunately, think there is no practicable alternative to capitalism and understand that if you have capitalism you have to have profits, otherwise the system won't work. The opposite is true as well of course. If you are against profits you should be against capitalism. Not like some reformists who shout 'tax the rich and their profits' and then expect the capitalist system to function normally.

Not that anything Labour is saying or proposing to do is anti-business or anti-profit. Miliband might have been unable to disguise his boredom when meeting capitalists but the most Labour has done is to criticise and say that they will put a stop to the practices that some capitalists and capitalist firms have engaged in to boost their profits such as tax-dodging, customer-cheating, supplier-bullying and market-rigging. This is to go no further than Ted Heath, when as Tory Prime Minister in 1973 he labelled one action of the businessman Tiny Rowland as the 'unacceptable face of capitalism'.

Which of course is not a criticism of capitalism as such but merely of the way some capitalists behave, a criticism that can be shared by other capitalists such as that of tax-dodging capitalist firms by other firms which don't have the chance to do this and so have to pay more tax. Though Hunt, with his enthusiasm for profits not just as the driving force of the capitalist economy but also as 'delivering shareholder return,' can't logically complain about this because the various sharp practices that capitalist firms engage in do increase 'shareholder return', at least in the short run, and are engaged in precisely to do this.

That the Labour Party is in any way anti-capitalist, anti-business or anti-profit is a joke as the capitalists who are raising this spectre must know full well. Labour has thoroughly absorbed enterprise culture.

PUBLICATIONS ORDER FORM

PAMPHLETS

Price and Qty

An Inconvenient Question: Socialism and The Environment.....	£2.00	x _____
What's Wrong With Using Parliament?.....	£1.00	x _____
Ecology and Socialism.....	£1.00	x _____
From Capitalism to Socialism: how we live and how we could live....	£1.00	x _____
Africa: A Marxian Analysis.....	£1.50	x _____
Socialism As a Practical Alternative.....	£1.00	x _____
Some Aspects of Marxian Economics.....	£2.00	x _____
How the Gods Were Made.....	£1.50	x _____
Marxism and Darwinism by Anton Pannekoek.....	£1.50	x _____
How we Live and How we Might Live by William Morris.....	£1.50	x _____
The Right to be Lazy and other articles by Paul Lafargue.....	£2.00	x _____
Marxism Revisited.....	£2.00	x _____
Socialist Principles Explained.....	£2.00	x _____
All the above pamphlets (25% discount).....	£15.00	x _____

BOOKS

Strange Meeting: Socialism and World War One.....	£4.50	x _____
A Socialist Life by Heather Ball.....	£3.75	x _____
Are We Prisoners Of Our Genes?.....	£4.75	x _____
Socialism Or Your Money Back (reduced from £9.95).....	£4.00	x _____
All the above books and pamphlets (25% discount).....	£20.00	x _____

DVD

Capitalism and Other Kids' Stuff.....	£5.75	x _____
Poles Apart? Capitalism or socialism as the planet heats up.....	£5.75	x _____

TOTAL£ _____

All prices include postage and packing. For six or more of any publication, reduce the price by one third.

Return this form along with your cheque or money order to:

The Socialist Party of Great Britain, FREEPOST, London, SW4 7BR, United Kingdom.

(No postage necessary if mailed within the UK)

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

.....

.....

City.....

..... Postcode.....

County.....

PHONE (optional).....

E-MAIL (optional).....

Xenophobia in South Africa

AS THE largest economy on the continent, South Africa has attracted Africans from as far afield as Nigeria and Ethiopia. They come as political refugees or economic migrants, with one goal: a better life. Following the end of apartheid, thousands of Chinese and South Asian foreign nationals have also been living and conducting business across the country. As spokesman for the International Organization for Migration (IOM), Joel Millman has explained it this way:

'It has been a big haven for gay, lesbian, transgender, intersex migrants who do not feel safe in their own communities. They are often much more open in South Africa than in other places and that also sometimes triggers a backlash. There are quite a lot of migrants who use South Africa as a conduit to get to South America and then on to North America. So –it is quite a mix. There are also a lot of people who just choose to start businesses there because it is a much more vibrant economy than in a place like Ethiopia or Uganda let us say' (gbcghana.com/1.1977268).

Migrants offer an invitation to rethink the concepts, foundations and boundaries of nation states and national identity. Instead of South Africans thriving on its much-vaunted multicultural identity, foreigners are being depicted as criminals, job snatchers, and parasites. The public perception of being swamped by foreigners is easily mobilised and fuels 'fears' that migrants increase employment competition, challenge religious, cultural or ethnic homogeneity and increase crime. In 2008, more than 60 people were killed in a series of attacks on foreign nationals. In 2011, around 120 were killed. In 2012, 140 foreigners were killed. In the latter half of January 2015 IOM reported nine people have been killed with hundreds of cases of looting from shops mostly owned by Somalis and Bangladeshi.

The IOM has condemned this growing violence against migrants which has now spread beyond Soweto. Violence has erupted in the Northern Cape, Western Cape, and KwaZulu Natal. Cape Town is said to be one of the most unequal in the country with foreigners facing increasing discrimination. Xenophobia is firmly embedded

across all strata of South African society but incidents of violence are more likely in impoverished areas where a riot can sometimes be the only way to draw government attention to their deprivation. A tinder-box combination of cramped living conditions and competition for jobs in poverty-stricken districts can create a conflagration of ethnic violence.

Asylum seekers are now being asked to supply pay slips, details of property owned and to reveal how much money they have. It is still not known what this information will be used for, since governments are only supposed to assess applications for asylum based on the level of persecution faced in the home country – not the amount of money in the applicants' bank accounts. In 2013, only two out of 12,000 applicants were granted asylum and the new process for applying for political asylum is very likely part of government's quest to rid South Africa completely of genuine asylum seekers and allow in only those with money.

The biggest problem facing the South African black working class is not foreign-owned 'spaza' shops but the fact that profits from industry flow to a tiny elite. Migrant workers are not to blame for the high levels of unemployment. Deporting 'illegal' African migrants and asylum seekers and encouraging xenophobia against Asian migrants will not uplift the black working class whose lives seem set to continue to deteriorate unless there is a fundamental change.

The capitalist system is the real enemy in South Africa – so said COSATU trade union general secretary Vavi – and problems such as xenophobia, corruption, gender-based violence, and substance abuse were rooted in economic misery. 'All of these are rooted in another set of three even bigger demons: unemployment, poverty, and inequality, which provide a fertile breeding ground for all the others,' he said. So it is even more tragic when he tweeted 'We condemn xenophobia but the current displacement of Africans even in spaza

shops mainly by guys from the East is not politically sustainable'. Vavi knows only too well the solution is not to blame other victims but to understand the cause of poverty and change the system which permits it.

ALJO





Fables and Fabians

NOT MUCH longer now. One of the priorities of the Coalition government was to legislate to introduce fixed term five year parliaments so

that the next election would be in May this year. At the time the discussion was about the need for some stability in government to ensure that any presented remedies for the recession would be able to run their course until the country emerged into blissful prosperity. There were of course other reasons – for example to discourage any prospective dissident Lib Dems from causing trouble when their seat on the Front Bench, with its treasured place at the upper reaches of the Greasy Pole and the right to pontificate on the chaotic futility of the efforts to control the vagaries of British capitalism, no longer depended on a particular government being in power.

Miliband

It has not turned out to be like that and the prospects now are for a 'balanced' House of Commons where political leaders are under pressure to reveal their present plans to establish a benignly humane society for us to flourish in. Capitalism continues on its vandalistic way while we are subjected to a series of insidious evasions by the party leaders. Ed Miliband, becoming more desperate each day to ward off those in his party who are haplessly impressed by the images recorded by sneak photo sleuths which expose his problems with eating a sandwich or dropping a coin or two to a street beggar, has been spouting the usual style of re-assurances on issues such as British capitalism's financial crisis, immigration and the like. Labour's back room strategists have worked hard to establish the delusion that these matters should be of serious concern to the voters. Which means that Miliband must pose as a leader who has the power and talent to deal with them.

National Health

And then, of similar anxiety, there is the National Health Service which is daily revealed as inadequate for anyone who is unable to afford treatment in some lavishly costly clinic. Miliband has seen the reports of problems in Accident and Emergency departments and on the wards and in GP surgeries. So he has promised that a Labour government will flood the service with doctors and nurses and GPs all of which, he says, will be driven by '...care, compassion and co-operation, not competition, fragmentation and privatisation'. Such alliteration may disguise the fact that a former Labour government began restricting the NHS on the grounds that it was being misused by hordes of hypochondriac cheats. On similarly shaky ground is David Cameron who has been promoting the false notion that the level of tax should be of concern to those who depend for their living on selling their labour power for a wage. There is, he assures us, an '...economic, moral and practical case' for lower taxes which a Tory government will be sure to apply, because '...it is people's money not government's money and we should leave them with as much to spend as we can rather than frittering it away on wasteful government projects'. But, like Miliband, Cameron is ignoring a vital reality; his government has worked devotedly to hold down 'peoples' money' as wages and to dis-empower any organisation such as a trade union which resists that policy.

Fabian Opinion

Emerging from the background, the Fabian Society recently offered a paper – *In It Together* – designed to provide some constructive advice to the Labour leadership: 'A Labour government is going to need all the help it can get to achieve its social mission and so needs business as an ally, not an enemy. Rather than seeing markets as needing regulation to prevent them being socially destructive, the left needs a greater focus on how they can be helped to create social good . . . What matters most is for Labour to engage business in a dialogue and then 'co-produce' a set of solutions that can achieve its vision of a more responsible capitalism . . . (but) Simply put, business doesn't trust Labour.' This argument, apart from anything else, does not fit in with the behaviour of the last Labour government under Tony Blair (who has since shown us how advantageous a 'dialogue' with 'business' can be) and its attacks on our standards of survival as a discipline favoured by ex-ministers like Alan Milburn – now approved by the Fabians as one of the 'New Labour ultras'. In opposition to this, the *Guardian* on 5 February listed some of the more powerful chiefs in industry who support the return of a Labour government. Like Lord Allen of Global Radio; Graham Cole of the helicopter firm Agusta Westland; Lord Noon the 'leafy meal' millionaire; Martin Littler of Inclusive Technology.

Socialist Candidates

The Fabian Society was formed in January 1884, named after the Roman general Fabius Maximus – 'The Delayer'. It has been associated with a variety of objectives, from its earliest pamphlet which urged ' . . . you must wait, as Fabius did most patiently . . . but when the time comes you must strike hard' to the present when its stated aims are rather less military: 'To promote greater equality of power, wealth and opportunities, the value of



Fabius Maximus

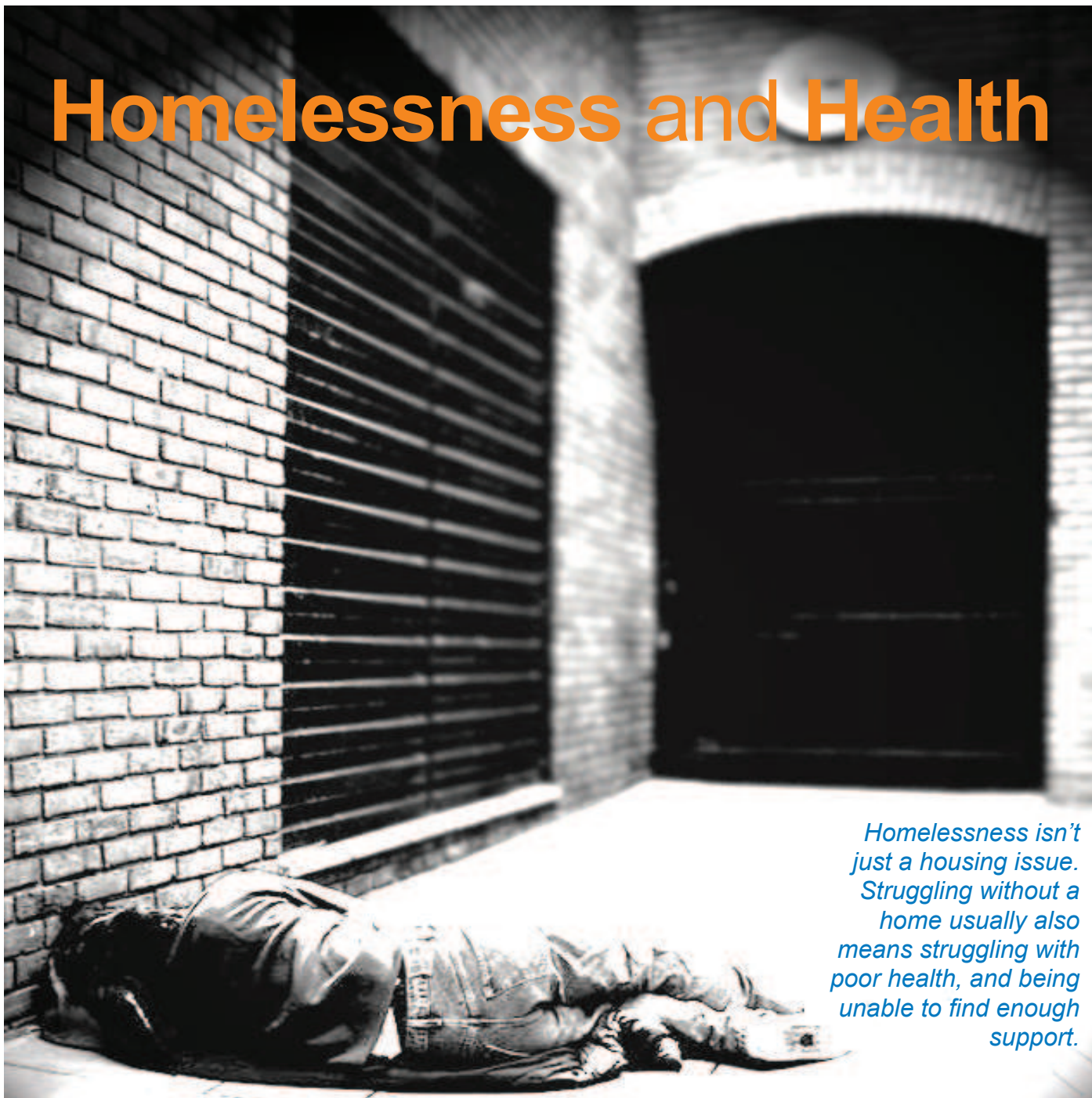
collective action and public service.' Its reformist objectives have included a national minimum wage, health service and education system, a welfare state. Among its members have been Ramsay MacDonald, Harold Wilson, Tony Benn – and er –

Tony Blair who saw Fabians as '...often born relatively wealthy but who were indignant about inequality...They were like the Georges Duhamel character who says "I love humanity; it's just human beings I can't stand"'. During the coming weeks we shall be subjected to a barrage of propaganda from the parties contesting the general election. We shall hear promises which will never be kept. Excuses for those given in the past which are now forgotten. Already there has been a contribution to this from the Fabian Society – an organisation claiming to be above such campaigning. We will have witnessed it all before, and been angry and frustrated before. The vital exception to this will be the ten candidates of the Socialist Party who will make no promises or attempts to re-write history. Their campaign will be on the single issue of the need to replace the inhuman system of capitalism with a world of freedom.

During the coming weeks we shall be subjected to a barrage of propaganda from the parties contesting the general election. We shall hear promises which will never be kept. Excuses for those given in the past which are now forgotten. Already there has been a contribution to this from the Fabian Society – an organisation claiming to be above such campaigning. We will have witnessed it all before, and been angry and frustrated before. The vital exception to this will be the ten candidates of the Socialist Party who will make no promises or attempts to re-write history. Their campaign will be on the single issue of the need to replace the inhuman system of capitalism with a world of freedom.

IVAN

Homelessness and Health



Homelessness isn't just a housing issue. Struggling without a home usually also means struggling with poor health, and being unable to find enough support.

If asked what the three most important aspects of our lives are, most of us would say something like having reasonable health, somewhere comfortable to live and people we're close to. But what happens if we have none of these? Poor health may rule out employment, which means having to rely on benefit payments, which limits what accommodation is affordable. And our health needs may mean that many types of housing are inaccessible or impractical. If we don't have friends or family in a position to help, we would expect the health service, councils, and other organisations to provide a safety net. However, the support services industry has failed to provide for the complex needs of people with both

health and housing problems. This is despite a definite relationship between homelessness and poor health. Research from St Mungo's Broadway and Homeless Link found that 73 percent of homeless people have a physical health problem, and 80 percent have mental health issues (p.3, <http://www.mungosbroadway.org.uk/documents/5390/5390.pdf>). To what extent poor health is a cause or an effect of homelessness is hard to determine; for most homeless people, it's probably both. What is clearer is that many people struggle to access often insufficient help from services lacking enough staff and resources.

The definition of homelessness includes people in many different situations. The most extreme, and

visible, aspect of homelessness is sleeping rough on the streets. A conservative estimate of the number of rough sleepers in England was 2,414 in 2013 (www.gov.uk/government/statistics/rough-sleeping-in-england-autumn-2013). Many more people are in various types of temporary housing, including homeless hostels, bed-and-breakfast accommodation, and staying with friends or relatives. Ten years ago, Crisis estimated that there were 380,000 of these 'hidden homeless', which is more than the total population of Leicester (p.3, www.crisis.org.uk/data/files/publications/HHBIC_report%5B1%5D.pdf).

Despite their varying circumstances, all homeless people

“The average age at death of a homeless person is 47 years old, compared to 77 for the wider population”

will have an unsettled way of life which exacerbates other problems, especially health. The most obvious, and stark, way of summing up the additional health concerns affecting homeless people is by looking at mortality rates. The average age at death of a homeless person is 47 years old, compared to 77 for the wider population. Homeless women, on average, live until they're only 43, whereas in the wider population, women tend to live longer than men (p.2, Homelessness: A Silent Killer, Crisis, 2011).

One reason why homeless peoples' wellbeing suffers is because of difficulties with accessing healthcare. Although there are no upfront charges to use NHS services, and prescription fees are waived for people on a low income, the bureaucracy of the NHS makes it hard for homeless people to navigate the system. The usual way to access healthcare is to make an appointment with your GP, who can then make referrals to hospitals or clinics for particular treatment. To register with a GP, you need a stable address, which creates the first barrier for homeless people. Without easy access to a GP, medical conditions could go undiagnosed or untreated. As a result, when a homeless person's health deteriorates, they are more likely to approach a hospital directly.

A&E

Homeless people attend Accident & Emergency, or Casualty, departments six times more often than the general population (p.2, Healthcare for the Homeless, Deloitte Centre For Health Solutions, 2012). The numbers of homeless people attending A&E has been flagged up in the context of unbearable pressures on hospitals. The efficiency of A&E departments is measured against the government target of 95 percent of patients being treated within four hours, lowered from 98 percent in 2010. This winter, the mainstream media reported on how many hospitals have failed to meet this target. At the start of 2015, only 86.7 percent of patients in England were seen within four hours (BBC News, 14/1/15), with worse figures in other parts of the UK. Eight hospitals declared 'major incidents' because demand on A&E units had increased to more than could be

managed.

The four hour target will be prominent in the minds of all A&E staff, alongside the stress of the excessive workload. The constant pressure to process patients quickly means that underlying health problems could be ignored. And the shortage of hospital beds means that not enough people will be admitted to a ward. Consequently, homeless people, especially rough sleepers, often get discharged from A&E straight back into a situation unlikely to promote their recovery. So, when their health deteriorates again, they will probably return to hospital in the near future. People trapped in this cycle of needing to go back to A&E again and again are called 'frequent flyers'. One in ten homeless people use A&E at least once a month (p.5, Healthcare for the Homeless, Deloitte Centre For Health Solutions, 2012), with some returning partly because they have nowhere else to go, and a hospital is somewhere warm, dry and reassuring.

Not all homeless people who come in to hospital fit this profile of repeat visitors not registered at a GP, though. Lots of people first become homeless at the same time that they enter hospital, usually as the result of a crisis. If someone has had a stroke or an amputation, then it may not be possible or practical for them to return to their previous home. Or, the trauma of being evicted may have pushed someone to attempt suicide.

On the ward

If a homeless person is admitted into hospital, they're likely to stay there three times longer than the general population (p.2, Healthcare for the Homeless, Deloitte Centre For Health Solutions, 2012). This is partly because homeless people – especially the long-term homeless – often have multiple and complicated health problems, particularly liver damage, asthma, pneumonia, tuberculosis, epilepsy, diabetes, malnourishment, trench foot, wound infection and blood-borne viruses like hepatitis C, especially among intravenous drug users. Drugs and alcohol are often used as a coping strategy by homeless people, and heavy use can lead to cirrhosis of the liver, infections and dependency. This creates a vicious cycle where homelessness both leads

to and is prolonged by addiction. 40 percent of homeless heavy alcohol users believe that a lack of stable housing is the main barrier to their recovery. Over a third of homeless people die due to alcohol or drug misuse (p.2, Homelessness: A Silent Killer, Crisis, 2011). The crisis of becoming homeless or struggling with homelessness as a way of life is also often linked with mental health problems. Someone with depression or schizophrenia is less likely to fit in to the expected routines which come with having a job and a 'normal' lifestyle. As a result, they are often pushed into homelessness, which will exacerbate their condition.

Another reason why homeless people remain in hospital longer than average is delays in discharging them. The aim is for a patient to leave hospital when they're judged 'medically fit' to do so. They may still need longer to recover, but they can do this in the reassuringly familiar surroundings of their own home. This isn't going to be possible if the patient is homeless. There have been many instances of homeless people being discharged from hospital in a taxi straight to a council office or a hostel, with no prior notice. This is particularly unsettling for the person, who has left the hospital without knowing whether they will get anywhere to stay, at a time when their health still makes them vulnerable. The practice of wards discharging homeless patients in this way has become less accepted in recent years. However, if a ward doesn't discharge a patient because they don't have anywhere suitable to go, then this creates the problem of 'bed blocking'. When someone who is medically fit to leave hospital remains in a hospital bed, it prevents someone else from having it and creates additional expense.

Discharged where?

If a patient needs to be discharged to a care home, a nurse would refer them to a social worker to make the necessary arrangements. But only people with severely reduced capabilities qualify for this assistance. Presumably, if hospital social services departments and care homes had more staff and resources, they would be able to support more people, and the criteria for accessing them could be

relaxed. As the situation is at the moment, many homeless people who would benefit from social services assistance aren't eligible. Instead, it's usually left to nurses to try and find accommodation to discharge a homeless person to. They may approach the local council, although the criteria for qualifying for statutory assistance excludes many single people except those judged extremely vulnerable. Even if a disabled homeless person is eligible for assistance under council criteria, then there still might not be anywhere appropriate for them. Temporary accommodation often means a placement in bed and breakfast accommodation, which is notoriously shabby and intimidating, and unsuitable for someone with poor mobility or little resilience. Council staff are aware that they are working within a frugal, inadequate system, and will try to compensate by interpreting their guidelines broadly and with some sympathy. So, temporary accommodation may be arranged in empty flats, care homes or hotels.

If there isn't an arrangement with the council, or if the homeless patient doesn't qualify for assistance from them, then the usual option would be direct access hostel accommodation. However, hostels can be almost as intimidating as bed and breakfasts, and are unlikely to be accessible for disabled people. They may have stairs, shared bathrooms and kitchens which could make them unsuitable. If someone can get into a hostel, then they would usually be able to stay there until they can find long-term housing, such as a flat rented from the council or a housing association. This could still take many months, but at least they would have the benefit of staff support.

If a homeless patient is in the country unofficially and has no recourse to public funds, councils and housing providers are very unlikely to help. Not being able to claim benefits or work legally will mean that they can't afford rented accommodation, including hostels and B&Bs, and will be left destitute.

Generally, the worse someone's health is, the harder it is for them to get suitable accommodation, especially at short notice. The situation is eased once someone turns 55, as this is the age that sheltered housing usually becomes available. But for younger people,

unless they have a profoundly limiting disability which makes them eligible for statutory support, there is very little available. In other words, there is a lack of accommodation for people whose needs are too high for usual homeless provision but too low for social services involvement. The types of people that would be worst affected by this gap in services are those who have had strokes, amputations, suicide attempts, a diagnosis of schizophrenia, or drug and alcohol addiction. Most would also suffer from depression.

The bottom line

Costs accrued by bed blocking and the complex medical issues of homeless people mean that the average cost of a hospital stay for a homeless person is nearly five times



higher than that for other people. More precisely, a homeless person will cost the NHS almost £1,900 per hospital stay on average, compared with £391 for the general population (p.6, Healthcare for the Homeless, Deloitte Centre For Health Solutions, 2012). The NHS is always being pushed to reduce its spending to cope with funding cuts. So, it was recognised that investing in more support for homeless patients would reduce costs in the long run. Looked at this way, the homeless are an economic problem, rather than people in need. In 2013, the government announced funding of £10 million to improve support for homeless people being discharged from English hospitals. This involved recruiting specialist staff

to arrange discharges into suitable accommodation with ongoing support. This led to reductions in both bed-blocking and frequent flyers. But this wasn't enough for funding to be extended, and many of these services are no longer running. The solution was only temporary.

To some extent, a society can be judged on how well it treats its most vulnerable people. The problem of homelessness only arises in a society where adequate housing is only available to those who can afford it and, as we've seen, people with poor health face additional barriers. These difficulties reflect wider problems in society:

1. The bureaucracy of the NHS, councils and support services, which makes it hard for some people to access help in a more planned way.

This problem can't be solved just by 'cutting red tape' or simplifying procedures. The NHS, councils and support services all have to operate in the same economic market as any other institution, so they have to be run like any other. This involves bureaucracy to ration and restrict who qualifies to use them.

2. The lack of resources in hospitals, whether a shortage of beds, nurses, mental health staff, social workers or support workers. Again, this problem can't be solved within capitalism because the economy can never support enough funding to meet everyone's needs. Money tends to go where it can be re-invested to create more wealth, and the NHS isn't an attractive investment for the elite. The economic downturn and climate of government spending cuts only highlight an ongoing problem.

3. The lack of accommodation which is both suitable for and available to disabled people. This is part of the overall housing shortage. It costs more to build or adapt accommodation for people with poor mobility, and landlords may be reluctant to invest the extra money if they don't think it will end up profitable. When houses are built to be sold or rented, rather than because people need them, then anyone without enough money will struggle.

All of these problems are built in to the way our society is structured. When society is driven by economic forces, rather than what people want and need, then some people inevitably suffer. Increased funding, new services, or reformed procedures may help a few people in the short-term, but they can't address the causes of the problem.

CLIVE HENDRY

Commercialising water in Ireland

It's a funny thing. The United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) contains a clause that says: 'Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control'(Article 25). Yet this has never been given effect by the states concerned. Instead they tend to try and manage markets so that people can try to secure their standard of living by buying it. Also, curiously, although food is mentioned, water isn't. The UDHR was adopted in 1948. It took until 2010 for the toothless United Nations to declare that water is a right too.

We can see how effective this change of heart has been, over in Ireland. Here, as the BBC notes: 'Tap water in the Republic of Ireland until now has been free' (www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-29426733). The government there, however, is intent on introducing water charges and water meters. As the info sheet from Irish Water explains: 'Water is a valuable resource but it is expensive to deliver. It is costing €1.2 billion every year to run the public water system, with €1 billion of this funding coming from the Exchequer. This current funding model is no longer sustainable. In addition our infrastructure is badly in need of an overhaul' (www.water.ie/why-value-water/). So, water is plentiful in Ireland, but treating it costs effort and in capitalism, effort means money.

Seeking profits

Note, they do not explain why this current funding model is becoming unsustainable, or how charging households directly is more sustainable. They say that under the current system, those who pay more taxes are paying, pro-rata, more of the costs of the infrastructure and

that this is unfair, and so those who have to count their pennies should be made to pay a wedge or lose their access to water. So much for the right to water in Ireland. Of course, this change is about commercialising water: 'This transition will ensure that Ireland is well positioned to attract foreign and indigenous investment, creating real potential for new jobs within the country' (www.water.ie/about-us/company/about-irish-water/). So, as a 'semi-state' company, it will be attracting

investment and profits from the water that hitherto was in effect a necessity of life to which everybody had free access.

Of course, this is hardly uncontroversial, and there have been demonstrations tens of thousands strong on the streets of Dublin against the charges. It is doing significant damage to the Fine Gael/Labour coalition government's popularity. There have also been reports of communities and activists blocking the installation of water meters, and sabotaging those that have been installed. Such actions are widespread, and being reported widely on social media. There are also widespread threats to boycott the charge and refuse to pay it.

Naturally, the government has tried to make concessions, giving people an uncharged allowance of 30,000 litres, and rebates in the form of a €100 water conservation grant to all households. Clearly, such concessions are designed to mitigate





“In effect, Sinn Fein walked up and stole the issue from the Trotskyists”

the transition to charging, whilst retaining the core principle that water has become a commercialised commodity in the hands of Irish Water.

There are formal campaigns at a national level as well. Right2Water is a campaign backed by Irish trade unions, and it was responsible for the main marches back in December 2014 that attracted 80,000 in Dublin marchers and around 200,000 overall across the country). As might be expected with such campaigns, the left parties, such as the Workers Party and the Communist Party are a formal part of the alliance.

Additionally, the Irish SWP has also been involved in promoting these protests, through their People Before Profit campaign, while the so-called Socialist Party (really another Trotskyist group) are engaging in their own boycott campaign. Whilst they are involved in the formal organisations, it seems clear that the real impetus on the ground is coming from the communities themselves, and all parties are running to keep up.

Stealing clothes

The far-left's main success has been to win a by-election in Dublin South. The Anti-Austerity Alliance (which some accuse of being broadly controlled by the 'Socialist Party') won a by-election there in October, thanks largely to their opposition to the water charges.

This has been a strong test of the tactic of using popular discontent and campaigns for reforms in order to win support for anti-capitalist organisations. Whilst it may seem that winning a seat in parliament

is a vindication of this tactic, it also illustrates its weakness. Sinn Fein had been expected to win the Dublin South seat, and were stung by the defeat. They are an opposition party in the Dáil, and one that is expected to gain significantly in the coming general election, feeding off discontent with the government and austerity.

They had previously been relatively quiet on the water charge issue, but their defeat stung them into action. They mobilised their supporters for the big protest marches, and ensured that Gerry Adams was given a significant platform. In effect, they walked up and stole the issue from the Trotskyists. This is a clear example of the way in which reforms to capitalism can be appropriated by any opposition party with sufficient

freedom to manoeuvre, and the way in which they do not guarantee any advance in support for socialism in itself.

Of course, if the 'Shinners' win the next election, with their anti-austerity agenda, they are going to have to make good all their promises, and that means governing within capitalism. They will find that the requirement to attract funds for all activities they want the state to fund means in some sense either accommodating to the markets or international bodies. Another party will come along and capitalise on the discontent with their policies (and, again, the advantage lies with the established parties with networks of support, it is unlikely to be a swing to the left that will follow them).

Actual socialism would, of course, have to find the materials and effort to maintain a water infrastructure. Maybe all the time and effort that goes into protesting could be instead spent on real solutions. Certainly, the actual expense and effort of administering taxes and soliciting investment, collecting charges, taking people to court, and so on, could be done away with. Instead, we could, and should guarantee every man, woman and child on earth their right to clean water.

PIK SMEET



Socialism: keeping it in the human family

The most common rebuttal of socialist society is that it is impossible to achieve because 'you can't change human nature.' Some people think that socialism sounds great but will never work in practice. They say it would only work in a world with perfect people. However, not only has 'human nature' changed many times in the past but there is no such thing as a static human nature. We are products of our environment, particularly of the wealth-producing system in which we live. People living under feudalism are motivated by feudal motives and think them natural and fixed, just as people living under capitalism are motivated by capitalist motives and mistakenly think those natural and fixed.

Many people fall back on

this human nature argument. Unfortunately for them, the argument supports our position. Human beings lived for 200,000 years communally, and as recently as the 19th century in North America, Native Americans lived that way. They shared pretty much everything. It's natural for us to do so. It's natural for us to work together for the betterment of the family, the neighborhood, the tribe, cooperatively. We evolved in that way, knowing we needed each other to survive and then building from there. The vast majority of us do not want to rule over others. We want to get along and live in harmony and cooperate with our fellows.

The monetary system doesn't work. Money has outlived its role. Every human transaction is tainted by the influence of money. We are

shackled to it, deprived of our liberty. It is not money we really need. We cannot eat money, or build houses with it. The money, private property and the exchange economy is just a hindrance. Socialism envisages a worldwide social system where the resources are considered the heritage of all the inhabitants of this planet. It's not a utopian dream, it's just a possible direction for society to take. It is the next step in the evolution and development of society, if we want it to be. Money and barter were required in times of scarcity. Today we live in abundance. There is enough on this globe (despite what the nay-sayers claim) for all to thrive – and what's more – sustainably.

Living communally: Native Americans in 19th century North America



We now have the knowledge and technology to provide easily for all human need. There is no shortage of land, food, building materials or the capacity to produce the things we need. There is plenty for all, for the benefit of all.

Socialism is feasible. We all know this first hand. A family operates as a form of socialism. From each of us come goods and services according to our abilities. To each of us, those goods and services are provided according to need. One or both parents go to work and provide the wherewithal to keep house. The children do not do outside work yet eat well every day.

Everybody shares the domestic chores the best they can, everyone pitches in, does their bit. Parents bring home food and share it out equally. They strive to make sure each child is given his or her equal share of clothing, gifts for their birthdays and Christmas. Family members look after one another, taking care of each other when sick, and caring for frail elderly grandparents. The system works. Families also help out other families by simply being good neighbours. When we invite friends over, we share the meal, offering the guest first pick, the most generous portions, the choicest cuts and we don't charge prices for it. Nor

do we ration our advice and wisdom according to who can afford it. At work, throughout the day, we work cooperatively with our co-workers. We give of ourselves, our knowledge, sharing our skills, without asking for money in return, expecting nothing more than a 'thank you'. So why don't we apply these rules to society at large? In fact, in various forms we have. Free access to health care for all via the NHS. Free primary and secondary school education. Free access to parks and. This is natural for the vast majority of us.

If you still need to be convinced and want to see an example of

socialism in action, simply visit your local public library. Anyone can use the public library for free. Anyone can go to the library, browse its books, use their computers, check out its CDs, all for free. It is a community resource of many dimensions. The library is somewhere to go when there's nowhere else to go. Marx had nothing against public libraries, having sat in the reading room of the British Library doing his research. Even an avowed capitalist such as Andrew Carnegie couldn't deny the social benefit of libraries and used his philanthropy to build them. Use of the public library is

should resist these closures.

In the world socialist 'family' we will still have planning, a list of 'household chores' requiring to be done to achieve social justice and prevent ecological catastrophe. But it doesn't have to be centrally planned by Big Brother. We do this locally, primarily. Local control, with integration into larger areas; neighbourhoods, towns, districts, regions and the world as a whole. As we get further away from the local, the planning becomes more and more generalised, with specifics left up to local economies. Within the plan, or more accurately, the plethora of

linked plans basic questions are asked and answered. How can we grow the widest range of crops in a sustainable fashion? How can we have the widest range of foods in a sustainable fashion? How can we do all of this and treat animals in a humane, compassionate manner? How to make sure our water supply is always safe and clean? Does the product serve the social good? Is the product environmentally safe? Is it safe for individuals, for the young, the elderly? Is it sustainable? Does it work and play well with others, with other

locales, different regions, and the planet as a whole? Do we actually need it? Broad guidelines create the umbrella, the boundaries, the general goals and pathways and all localities are represented in all other bounded areas. Localities are then free to implement the specifics according to what works for them, as long as these also fit in holistically with the rest of the communities. One family pulling together. And that one family owns the means of production. As in, all of us, together.

ALJO



The socialist 'family' and its 'household chores'

not means-tested. No one is making a profit. It provides a social good that cannot be measured in pounds and pence. The same model can be applied to every aspect of society. The library shows people on a daily basis that there is another way to do things besides relying on the private-owned-for-profit capitalist market. Libraries are a model that must scare those powerful men and women who cannot abide the idea of a common public good not built on a profit model. Libraries are highly subversive. Perhaps that is why they are endeavouring to shut as many as possible down and a reason why we

“Why I wouldn’t make a good MP”

*On 8 February **Mike Foster**, the Socialist Party candidate for Oxford West & Abingdon was invited to address a group of electors in Oxford. Here is what he said.*

Thank you all for taking the time to come along this evening to hear why I wouldn’t make a very good MP. Definitely don’t put a cross in the box for the Socialist Party of Great Britain if you somehow come to the conclusion that I would play the Westminster game for the benefit of everyone. Because I couldn’t, even if I tried. No-one can. The state, and the very way that our society is put together, can’t be made to work in the interests of the vast majority of people. MPs who start out with good intentions about reforms and representing their constituents soon get stifled by the cumbersome bureaucracy and made to follow vested interests or the dictates of the elite. MPs who don’t start out with good intentions probably have an easier job.

If you vote for the Socialist Party, you wouldn’t be voting to put me in that position, thankfully. Instead, you’d be making the point that the whole system which we live under has to be replaced.

Capitalism

We would say that to aim for a better world, we first have to understand how our present society is arranged. For the last few hundred years, society has been divided into just two main groups, or classes. There’s the overwhelming majority of us – well over 90 percent – who don’t own much in the big scheme of things and can only get what we can afford through our wages, savings or state subsidies. If we’re able to find employment, we get our money by selling our time and our abilities to companies and organisations. These same companies and organisations then sell the services we run and the products we make back to us. But collectively, we don’t get back all that we put in. It’s a lop-sided arrangement. All the economic clout is with the corporations and landowners, owned by a tiny minority

of people, possibly around 5 percent. Owning the means of production allows them to cream off a profit or a surplus for themselves, and they do this by exploiting the rest of us. Their economic power is backed up



by political power. The state is there to try and manage the status quo, and protect the interests of those with all the wealth. This doesn’t mean that they have control over the economy, though. Market forces fluctuate between growth and slump regardless of what politicians and corporate strategists want.

“If you vote for the Socialist Party, you’re making the point that the whole system has to be replaced”

Instead, they’re more likely to be playing catch-up and trying to keep things financially viable in a shaky economy. It’s like being on a fishing boat on a choppy sea, struggling to stay afloat while the boat’s owner, Captain Birdseye, relaxes on a desert island.

This arrangement leads to massive inequalities in wealth, not just within this country, but across the globe. Goods and services only go to those who can afford them, not to those who need them. Those who can’t afford the basics risk falling into a lifestyle of poverty it’s hard to escape from. Living in an unequal world where everything is rationed creates divisions between us, leading to prejudice and discrimination. Even those of us with a reasonable standard of living never have enough real involvement or sense of ownership in where we work and live. Although we’ve all got our own role in making society tick along, we’re never really satisfied with it. We often feel powerless to influence what really matters to us. We end up stuck in unfulfilling jobs, stressed about whether we can afford to pay the bills, or frustrated by our lack of independence.

Reform or Revolution

Other political parties support the basic way society is structured, or just assume it’s the only way things can be. They would say that it can be improved from within, by changes to the law, or finding more funding for public services. Reforms or increased public spending may help some people in the short-term. But they only last as long as they’re financially viable or politically acceptable. A reform has to fit in with the economy and the political climate, which run in the interests of the elite. The needs and wishes of the vast majority of people aren’t as important.

People have been campaigning for higher wages or increased funding for the NHS for decades, without long-lasting, satisfactory resolutions ever being found. It’s the same with campaigns to protect the environment. Concerns about reducing pollution or preserving wildlife tend to be over-ruled when there’s money to be made. Our society treats the environment as a commodity, as something to be exploited to make a profit. Whereas surely the environment should be treated as a precious resource which shouldn’t be squandered? The same problems keep resurfacing again and again: funding shortages, low pay,

climate change, terrorism, war, famine. This shows that they haven't been addressed at their cause.

Socialism

We would say that to solve the problems in society, we have to change the way society is structured. This means going from our world where the means to produce and distribute wealth are owned by a minority, to one where those resources and facilities are owned by everyone in common. Then, goods would be produced and services would be run directly for anyone who wants them, without the dictates of the economic market. Industries and services would be run just to satisfy people's needs and wants. This doesn't mean that resources would be squandered. Our present society is much more wasteful, not only in its exploitation of the environment, but also in the effort and energy used up by the bureaucracy of pushing money around. The new world we advocate would be able to manage our natural resources in a sustainable way, as the waste and short-term profitability which lead to environmental damage wouldn't be there.

All this could only be achieved by fundamentally changing the way society is organised, a revolution. The kind of revolution we want is one which involves the vast majority of people across the world. Every country now is part of an integrated global economy and class structure. So, people across the world would have to want to change society. The only legitimate and practical way this could be achieved is by organising equally and democratically. This means voluntary, creative work, with decisions and responsibilities agreed through everyone having an equal say. This would mean a much broader and more inclusive use of democracy than we're used to today. Different democratic organisations or procedures would apply in different circumstances. This doesn't mean having leaders or groups with more authority than others.

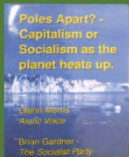
The kind of society we aim for is reflected in the way the Socialist Party is organised. We don't have leaders or hierarchies, all work is voluntary, and our principles are decided on democratically. This approach has worked for us for over a hundred years. We publish literature and audio-visual materials, hold discussion groups and talks, and we also stand candidates in elections, hence me being here. We do this to use what limited democracy we have in our current society to advocate a better world for everyone.

socialist party dvd



Capitalism and Other Kids' Stuff

Takes a fresh look at the world, and challenges basic assumptions about capitalism.



Poles Apart?

Capitalism or Socialism as the planet heats up.

For a copy, complete the order form on page 7



Saving Greek capitalism

THE NEW Greek Finance Minister, Yanis Varoufakis, has been variously described as a Marxist tinged with Keynes or a Keynesian tinged with Marx. He certainly has a knowledge of Marx.



A blog item of his from 4 April 2012, entitled 'On Keynes, Marx and the value of models at a time of Crisis', showed that he recognises that Marx advanced a theory that capitalism could recover from any economic crisis because these eventually created the conditions for a recovery.

'What Marx did was to take the model of capitalism that had the most *kudos* in his time (i.e. the theories of Adam Smith and David Ricardo) and show that, by their own criteria, and under the force of their own assumptions, even the most efficient, most competitive, corruption-free capitalism would, unavoidably generate crises. To show this, Marx strove to demonstrate that, even if all profits were automatically saved, capitalism would periodically fall in deep holes of its own making.'

However, Varoufakis went on to claim:

'There is something important missing in Marx's analysis of crashes and crises. What? The possibility that, when the 'faeces hits the fan', and some monumental, as opposed to run-of-the-mill, Crash occurs (as it did in 1929 and then again in 2008), capitalists will simply fail to play the game that Marx said they will. What game is that? Of investing in capital goods, production, labour, every penny they have accumulated as a result of past and present profits.'

But Marx did not make this distinction between 'run-of-the-mill' and 'monumental' crises. It might take longer but capitalism could still recover from a Crash with a capital C. Capitalism could always get out of the holes it periodically dug for itself -- and will until its gravediggers come along to bury it.

According to Varoufakis, Keynes

'instinctively understood something important about capitalism that Marx did not allow himself to dwell upon: that when capitalism digs a hole and then falls into it, it is perfectly capable of failing to climb out again. You see, the difference between Keynes and Marx was that Keynes *believed* in capitalism; he thought of it a little like Churchill thought of democracy (a terrible form of government but the best of all available alternatives). In fact, Keynes was eager to save capitalism from itself; to identify faults in its functioning and fix them so as to prevent crises from turning into implosions with the capacity to undermine its long term future. Marx, on the other hand, had an agenda for transcending capitalism (socialism, he called the 'next', more developed, phase).'

Because he doesn't think that the economic and political conditions during a big crisis are good for a socialist transformation of society, he argues that Keynes's policy recipes should be tried to save capitalism from collapse so as to buy time for more favourable conditions for a changeover to socialism to emerge.

This won't work. Surprisingly, Varoufakis himself admitted this when he wrote in the same blog:

'Marx was right: capitalism cannot be civilised by means of some benevolent government that applies the right dosage of fiscal and monetary policy at the right time.'

Another economics professor, who is advising the Syriza government, even understands what socialism involves:

'The transition from capitalism to communism is necessarily related to the abolition of value form, i.e. money and commodity, and the form of enterprise' (John Milios, *The Critique of Political Economy as a Critique of the Left, Thesseis* #101, 2007).

It's not going to make any difference, though. The Syriza government won't be able to civilise capitalism even if saves Greek capitalism.

William Morris and His Legacy: Anarchy and Beauty

THE WILLIAM Morris exhibition at the National Portrait Gallery in London was curated by Fiona McCarthy, author of *William Morris: A Life for Our Time* where she describes Morris's politics as 'Marxism with visionary libertarianism.'

For socialists, the exhibition contains a cornucopia of delights, and fleshes out what WB Yeats wrote in *The Trembling of the Veil*: 'I cannot remember who first brought me to the old stable beside Kelmscott House, William Morris's house at Hammersmith, and to the debates held there upon Sunday evenings, by the Socialist League. I was soon of the little group who had supper with Morris afterwards. I met at these suppers very constantly Walter Crane, Emery Walker, in association with Cobden-Sanderson, the printer of many fine books, and less constantly Bernard Shaw, and perhaps once or twice Hyndman the socialist and the anarchist Prince Kropotkin. There, too, one always met certain more or less educated workmen, rough of speech and manner, with a conviction to meet every turn.'

The portrait *William Morris* by GF Watts gives Morris a Dionysian quality, of which Yeats wrote 'a reproduction of his portrait by Watts hangs over my mantelpiece... its grave wide-open eyes, like the eyes of some dreaming beast... while the broad vigorous body suggests a mind that has no need of the intellect to remain sane.' When Morris lay dying one of his doctors diagnosed his fatal illness as 'simply being William Morris, and having done more work than most ten men.'

Of special interest is the *Gold tooled binding of William Morris's copy of Marx's Le Capital*. Morris started to read Marx in 1883 and by 1884 'the book 'had been worn to loose sections by his own constant study of it' and had to be rebound. It is always a pleasure to see the Hammersmith Socialist Society red banner which dates from Morris's departure from the Socialist League to form the Hammersmith Socialist Society in 1890.

Roger Fry's *Edward Carpenter* is a portrait of the gay socialist who was a comrade of Morris in the SDF, and later joined Morris, Eleanor Marx and Edward Aveling in the Socialist League. Carpenter advocated free love, women's emancipation, and linked gay emancipation with social transformation. Carpenter lived openly with a working class lover near Sheffield for 30 years.

The oil painting of anarchist communist *Prince Peter Kropotkin* by Nellie Heath was commissioned by the Royal Geographical Society in recognition of Kropotkin's scientific achievements. Oscar Wilde described Kropotkin as 'a man with a soul of that beautiful white Christ'

(*De Profundis*). Significantly for socialists, Kropotkin concluded in *The Wages System*: 'a society that has seized upon all social wealth, and has plainly announced that all have a right to this wealth, whatever may be the part they have taken in creating it in the past, will be obliged to give up all ideas of wages, either in money or in labour notes.'

Bernard Partridge's portrait of *Bernard Shaw* reminds us that Lenin was right when he described Shaw as 'a good man fallen among Fabians' (*Six Weeks in Russia*, Arthur Ransome). Shaw was on the point of joining the Marxist SDF but instead joined the Fabian Society. Shaw's *The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism and Capitalism* was republished in 1937 and Hardy in the *Socialist Standard* wrote that Shaw's views were 'essentially utopian – that there will be money incomes under socialism, and that the capitalist foundation can be made to support a socialist system of society.'

The iconic Gilman photograph gelatin silver print of *Oscar Wilde and Lord Alfred Douglas* is featured in the exhibition. Unlike Shaw, Wilde understood socialism, and under the influence of Kropotkin he wrote in *The*

Soul of Man Under Socialism 'with the abolition of private property, then, we shall have true, beautiful, healthy Individualism. Nobody will waste his life in accumulating things, and the symbols for things. One will live.'

Socialist women comrades of Morris are featured in the exhibition such as the pencil drawing of *Eleanor Marx* by Grace Black. In *The Woman Question* Eleanor Marx and Edward Aveling identified that 'the position of woman rests on an economic basis' with 'no solution in the present condition of society' but in socialism 'the woman will no longer be the man's slave but his equal.' The carbon print of *Annie Besant* by Herbert Rose Barrand portrays the author of the 1888 article *White Slavery in London* which described conditions of work in the Bryant & May match factory in London's East End and led to the successful London Match Girls strike.

William Morris and His Legacy: Anarchy and Beauty is to be recommended if only to give modern audiences an introduction to socialist ideas. As Morris wrote 'Our business... is the making of Socialists, i.e. convincing people that Socialism is good for them and is possible. When we have enough people of that way of thinking, they will find out what action is necessary

for putting their principles in practice. Therefore, I say, make Socialists. We Socialists can do nothing else that is useful' (*Commonweal* 15 November 1890).

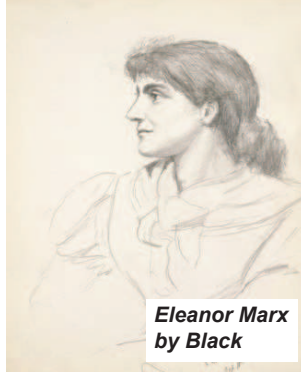
STEVE CLAYTON



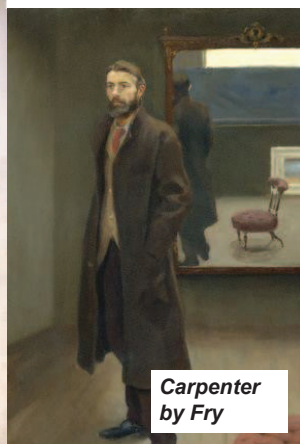
**Wilde & Douglas
by Gilman**



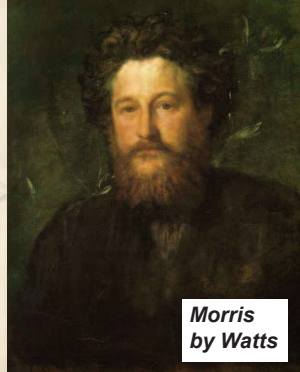
**Shaw by
Partridge**



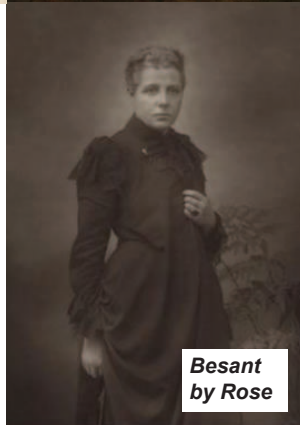
**Eleanor Marx
by Black**



**Carpenter
by Fry**



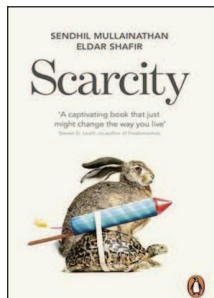
**Morris
by Watts**



**Besant
by Rose**

Scarce Resources

Sendhil Mullainathan and Eldar Shafir: *Scarcity: The True Cost of Not Having Enough*. Penguin £9.99.



Scarcity is defined here as 'having less than you feel you need'. This is applied not just to material goods and services but also to time-management and, less obviously, to dieting and

loneliness. The basic idea is that scarcity can take over your mind, sometimes leading to a focus on an up-coming deadline that makes you more effective. But more often it can reduce our mental capacity, what the authors call our bandwidth, making it hard to take proper account of other matters. So if you are really busy, you may focus on urgent tasks, neglecting those that are important but not so urgent. And poverty may lead you to forget to take your medication.

The *Socialist Standard* is not a journal about how to deal with your to-do list or how to keep to a diet, so let's focus on the book's remarks on poverty. Mullainathan and Shafir argue that 'the reason the poor borrow is poverty itself'. You might think that you don't need the combined efforts of a Professor of Economics and a Professor of Psychology to tell you that, but in fact it is not quite as mundane as it appears. The point is that borrowing (often at high rates of interest) is not caused by predatory lenders, financial ineptitude or a common tendency to think about the immediate future rather than the long term. Poor farmers or market traders, in Africa or India for instance, borrow in order to tide them over periods when they have less income or bigger expenses, since they do not have enough financial slack to cope with shocks to their budget.

Various solutions are offered to these and other problems of scarcity. Give or lend people money at the right time to avoid problems with insufficient financial slack. Reduce the chance of people taking out ruinous payday loans by showing them the cost in dollars rather than in abstract interest rates. Or get employers to provide advances on wages.

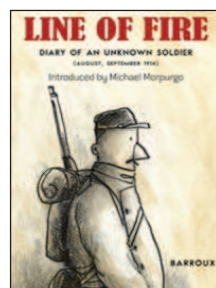
But what is missing in all this is any real understanding of the causes

of poverty. Mullainathan and Shafir note that half the children in the world live below the global poverty line, and that half the children in the United States will at some point be on food stamps. But they simply do not mention exploitation, the extent of inequality, the wealth of the super-rich or the feasibility of growing enough food for all. A proper study of scarcity requires rather more depth than is shown here.

PB

Senseless slaughter

Barroux, *Line of Fire*, Phoenix Yard Books, 2014. Ivan Petrus, *The Nieuport Gathering*, Lannoo, 2011. Jacques Tardi, *It was the War of the Trenches*, Fantagraphics, 2011



Those interested in the literature of the First World War may have come across other 'graphics' (with such gruesome contents one can hardly use the word 'comic') similar

to *Charley's War* (reviewed in the August 2014 *Socialist Standard*). Most of these were originally French language. France, unlike the UK, still has a thriving 'graphic' scene. In contrast to *Charley's War* or American works, in French language publications the artist and writer

are identical and the material was not originally produced as weekly or monthly part works but as a single unit. There should be, therefore, a unity that English language 'graphics' lack.

In Michael Morpurgo's introduction to the Barroux book he comments about the diarist from whose notes the work is derived: "He is the unknown soldier and these are his words. Read them and weep." Unfortunately there is little to spark such a reaction. The carrot noses are an irritating novelty.

The *Nieuport Gathering* is the story of a pledge of three men of different nationalities to meet after war and how those three men met their deaths.

The historical treatment of the shocking events combined with saccharine Spielburgese sentimentality means, that like the other contemporary book, it does not engage.



The *War of the Trenches*, on the other hand, cannot but. Originally published in 1994, this is a work burns with feeling.

The senseless slaughter was still

then a live issue. Particularly vivid is the contrast between priestly class cant ("Joyful are those families whose blood flows for their country") and the feelings of a 'real' soldier ("Bastards, bastards, miserable fucking bastards! Fuck the army! France can kiss my arse!"). This is a non-chronological sequence of episodes, impressionistic in the best sense of the word. One may disagree with author's view of human nature ("men are sheep... victims of their own docility") but one cannot help but be impressed by this immaculately researched and beautifully illustrated book. Tardi concludes "We are all of us, still down here, down in the trenches": Even now the vicious warmongers are inciting hatred, not of fellow Europeans but of fellow workers, stirring up the necessary background for their oil wars. War, then and now, is about profit for the ruling class... and loss for the working class.

KAZ

SOCIALISM OR YOUR MONEY BACK

The capitalist century, by a socialist journal. A running commentary of one hundred years of history - as it happened.

- Two World Wars
- Russian Revolution
- General Strike
- The rise of Hitler
- Spanish Civil War
- Hiroshima
- The Silicon Chip
- Pop music
- ...and much more

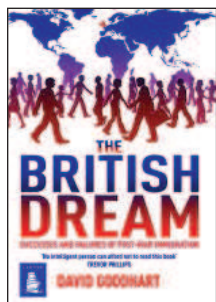


This collection will revive a jaundiced spirit... Every home should have one.
THE INDEPENDENT
A refreshing read...inspiring...a gem...
UNDERGROUND FOCUS

To order a copy, complete form on page 7

Dreams and Nightmares

David Goodhart: *The British Dream: Successes and Failures of Post-War Immigration*. Atlantic £9.99.



This is a real mixed bag of a book, a curate's egg as you might say. It combines some interesting observations about migration with some rather unconvincing arguments.

Goodhart points out that many of the outcomes of immigration to Britain were unplanned and not those envisaged; but this after all is what happens with much government legislation under capitalism. The Salman Rushdie affair of 1989, arising from the publication of his novel *The Satanic Verses*, led to a boost in the authority of Muslim leaders in Britain, and 'began to mark out Muslims as a special, and in some ways especially problematic, minority'. Satellite television has played an important role in slowing down the integration of immigrants into mainstream British culture, as it enabled people to watch news and soaps from 'back home' (Turkey, for instance) rather than the BBC.

Goodhart sees himself as a Labour-supporting 'progressive' but as one impressed by Conservative politician David Willetts' claim that cultural diversity undermines the legitimacy of a universal welfare state. This just illustrates how little difference there is between Labour and Tory policies, and it is also part of the current attack on benefits for those at the bottom of the pile. He observes that forty percent of ethnic minority Britons (not all of whom are immigrants, of course) are poor but he has little idea of the capitalist framework within which migration and the struggle for jobs and housing occur. He refers quite often to 'the elite', but this seems to mean the political and media establishment rather than the capitalist class. Moreover, last year's *Sunday Times* Rich List featured nine immigrant individuals or families in its top twelve, but the extent of inequality gets almost no mention here.

The two biggest sets of arrivals in the last decade are Poles and Somalis, neither of whom Goodhart regards as 'model immigrants' (which presumably would mean causing no problems and producing plenty of profits for the owners of industry). The Poles are mostly hard workers but (though no real evidence for this is provided) have helped to drive down wages for the unskilled. Moreover they 'mainly have a guest worker mentality and many have no particular interest in joining British society'. As for Somalis, they are highly dependent on welfare, and as a group have retreated into themselves. So refusing to integrate (whatever that might mean exactly) is seen as a major problem. Perhaps, if they lived in grand mansions in some posh part of London and consequently had little contact with the average worker, that kind of non-integration would be acceptable.

PB



socialist standard

■ in depth
■ in touch
■ insight

www.worldsocialism.org



Bitter Pill

IN THE 1972 science fiction film *Solaris*, a group of cosmonauts discover an unusual planet, but are unable to comprehend its alien nature or its psychological effects on themselves. Adam Curtis, in his latest documentary,

Bitter Lake, argues that this is analogous to American, British and Soviet involvement in Afghanistan since the Second World War.

The programme's title comes from the venue on the Suez Canal for a meeting between President Roosevelt and Saudi Arabian King Abdulaziz in 1945. Curtis says that this was a starting point for the ongoing complicated power struggles in the Middle East. His focus is on Afghanistan, where both the Soviets and the West optimistically and naively tried to implement their brands of capitalism without understanding how the local culture and political economy reacted. The result was not only upheaval and bloodshed, but also growing doubts about the efficacy of both variants of capitalism.

Recent official accounts have repackaged events in Afghanistan as a conflict between 'good' and 'evil'. Terrorists have provided

a convenient archetype of 'evil', which draws attention away from how actions by western forces helped create the current situation. Western influences brought violence and instability to the people of Afghanistan, who in some cases turned to an ideology ostensibly opposed to western values: fundamentalist interpretations of Islam. American and European military and economic involvement fuelled jihadism, which in turn fuelled more western involvement, creating a feedback loop. When politicians simplify all this as a battle between 'good' and 'evil', they are disguising the real messy conflict between ideological, political and economic forces. None of this has benefited the majority, as grim footage of bombed-out cities proves.

Curtis explains in his blog that producing the documentary for BBC iPlayer means that he 'isn't restrained by the rigid formats and schedules of network television'. Indeed, it's hard to imagine his 136-minute polemic fitting in with the BBC's other output. Between the brief packets of narration and captions are scenes of army patrols, shootings and explosions, alongside clips from sources as diverse as *Carry On Up The Khyber* and *Blue Peter*, as well as *Solaris*. This unconventional style suits the imaginative, perceptive arguments Curtis makes.

MIKE FOSTER



Meetings

For full details of all our meetings and events see our **Meetup** site:
<http://www.meetup.com/The-Socialist-Party-of-Great-Britain/>

Swansea Branch

Monday 9 March 2015 7.00pm

'Which way forward for Britain?'

A debate between the Green Party and the Socialist Party of Great Britain

Ashley Wakeling, Green Party candidate and Brian Johnson, Socialist Party candidate for Swansea West.

Venue: Unitarian Church, High Street, Swansea SA1 1NZ.

Lambeth Discussion Group

Thursday 12 March 2015 7.00pm

'Why I Won't Make a Good MP'

Speaker: Danny Lambert, Socialist Party candidate for Vauxhall

Socialist Party Head Office, 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN.

Socialist Party Head Office

Sunday 15 March 2015 3.00pm

'Genocide: Ordinary People in Extraordinary Circumstances'

Speaker: Gwynn Thomas

52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN.

West London Branch

Tuesday 17 March 2015 8.00pm

'The Biggest Festival of the 19th Century: Life in the Paris Commune'

Speaker: Steve Clayton

Chiswick Town Hall, Heathfield Terrace, London W4 4JN.

Manchester Branch

Saturday 21 March 2015 2.00pm

'Freedom of Expression'

The Unicorn pub, 26 Church Street, Manchester M4 1PW.

East Anglia Regional Branch

Saturday 21 March 2015 from 12-4pm

Informal discussion and branch business

The Quebec Tavern, 93-97 Quebec Road, Norwich NR1 4HY.

East Anglia Regional Branch

Saturday 28 March 2015 2.00pm

'Conspiracy and Class Power'

An audio talk by Michael Parenti with an introduction and comment by Stair.

The Reindeer Pub, 10 Dereham Road, Norwich NR2 4AY.

Socialist Party Head Office

Sunday 29 March 2015 3.00pm

'William Blake the Visionary Revolutionary'

Speaker: Steve Clayton

52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN.

Socialist Party Head Office

Annual Conference

Friday 3 April 2015, 10.30am to 5.30pm

Saturday 4 April 2015, 10.30am to 5.00pm

52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN.

Picture Credits

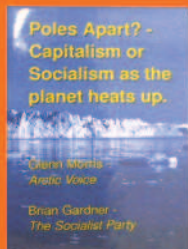
Cover: Homeless man – © Eric Pouchier, 2005, CCA SA 2.5. Dulwich Hamlet F. C. – urban75.net.
p4: Dysprosium, 2009, Jurii, CCA 3.0; electron shell, 2006, Greg Robson, CCA-SA 2.0. **p8:** Spaza shop in Cape Town, 2012, FreddiaA, CCA-SA 3.0
p10: Homeless man - www.cgpgrey.com; CCA 2.0 license. **p13-14:** Right2Water, 2015, right2water.ie/blog; pump in Portmagee, 2007, Jonathan Billinger, CCA-SA 2.0; Blarney Castle well, 2007, Andy Beecroft, CCA-SA 2.0; **p16:** Discussion 1 - © Shimer College 2010 CCA-SA 3.0 Unported. Discussion 2 - © Cary Bass 2007 CCA-SA 3.0 Unported. Strategic planning - © Marine Institute 2006 CCA 3.0 Unported. Meeting - © Scott Penner 2010 CCA-SA 2.0. Cheadle Hulme train - © Geoff Welding 2007 CCA-SA 2.0. Autobahn - © Björn Laczay 2007 CCA 2.0. Distribution centre - © Nick Saltmarsh 2008 CCA 2.0. Waste - © S. Müller 2007 CCA 2.5. 'Need for speed' - © jimmy brown 2008 CCA 2.0. Farmer – United States Agency for International Development. **p20:** Scarcity – booktopia.com. *Line of Fire* – brokenfrontier.com. *The Newport Gathering* – goodreads.com. *It was the War of the Trenches* – goodreads.com. **p21:** *The British Dream* – largeprintbookshop.co.uk. **p24:** Macao, 2008, Jimmy Yao, CCA-SA 2.0

socialist party dvd



Capitalism and Other Kids' Stuff

Takes a fresh look at the world, and challenges basic assumptions about capitalism.



Poles Apart?

Capitalism or Socialism as the planet heats up.

For a copy, complete the order form on page 7

Declaration of Principles

This declaration is the basis of our organisation and, because it is also an important historical document dating from the formation of the party in 1904, its original language has been retained.

Object

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.

Declaration of Principles

The Socialist Party of Great Britain holds

1. That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e. land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.

2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as

a class struggle between those who possess but do not produce and those who produce but do not possess.

3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.

4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind, without distinction of race or sex.

5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.

6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organize consciously and politically for the conquest of

the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.

7. That as all political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.

8. The Socialist Party of Great Britain, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be wrought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.

50 Years Ago

Churchill in perspective

SUFFICIENT TIME has passed since Churchill's funeral for popular emotions to wane—but not sufficient yet to make it likely that his words and deeds will be subjected to any analysis for popular consumption. No doubt historians in the future will discover reasons to doubt his greatness, but there is no need to await the passage of time.



In what way can he be considered great?

His actions concerning the working class, his military prowess, his flair for foreign affairs?

It was he who called out the troops during the Dock Strike in 1911. He was Chancellor of the Exchequer in the government which put on the statute book the 1927 Trades Disputes Act, prohibiting strikes by one group of workers in sympathy with another, curtailing the right of picketing, and preventing the Civil Service unions affiliating to the T.U.C. (...)



In death, as in life, he served our rulers well. The pomp and ceremony of his funeral was a circus for the diversion of the working class. The entire pulpit—religious, political, press and radio—have been loud in his praise. Here was a man, they said, for workers to look up to, to recognise as a leader, and in so doing to pay homage to future leaders and to the principle of leadership.

Here perhaps we may rephrase Bevan's comment, and apply it to all leaders—The failure of their actions is concealed by the majesty of their promises.



Where did Churchill lead the workers? Where will any leaders take them? Workers have only to reflect on their experiences—not for

Churchill and his class, but for those they dominate, it is a life of blood, sweat, toil and tears.

And it will remain so, until the same workers who are now deluded into an hysterical hero worship of men like Churchill, learn that their interests lie in dispensing with leaders and setting up a social system in which all men stand equally.

(from article by K.K., *Socialist Standard*, March 1965)

ACTION REPLAY

Dulwich Hamlet F.C and Ultras

DULWICH HAMLET F. C. are a non-league football team who play less than twenty minutes away from the head office of the Socialist Party in South London.

Vice magazine described them thus: 'London's Left-Wing Utopian Non-League Ultras Are Reclaiming Football' in the rather sensationalist title of their article (January 5). Ultras are football fans known for fanatical support and devotion to their club, primarily existing in Italian football. Ultras may use smoke flares, banners, wave flags, get involved in fanzines or instigate chants and songs at matches.

Like most, if not all, non-league clubs – at Dulwich, ticket prices are much more affordable than Premier League clubs. The fans at Dulwich call themselves the Rabble and, although the club has played since 1893, more recently some of the fans have been involved in creating a particular culture around the club.

Although the club is currently owned by a private company, the Hadley Property Group, a group of keen fans called 'Dulwich Hamlet Supporters Trust' seeks



full or partial supporter/ community ownership of the club. The club culture commits to combatting the prevalent homophobia in football, and the club's players wore rainbow laces to this effect (the first non-league club to do so). The fans even publish their own website (dulwichhamlet.org), regular podcast 'Forward the Hamlet' and fanzine 'The Moral Victory' edited by Louis Daly.

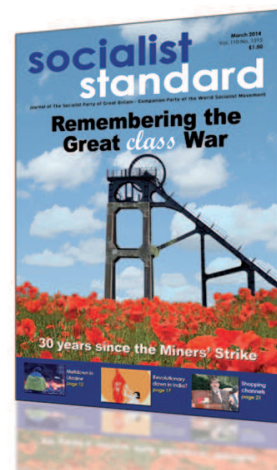
A smaller group of fans, distinct from the Rabble, call themselves 'the Comfast chapter'. The Comfast chapter, as with non-league Clapton F. C. ultras in North London, are more akin to famously left-

wing ultras following F. C. St. Pauli in Germany. The Comfast chapter have slogans such as 'Communism is inevitable'. Robert Molloy-Vaughan who runs Comfast was involved in a podcast called 'This is Deep Play' which was against commercialisation of football but described this as 'For Future Football' as opposed to the more negative 'Against Modern Football' slogan. However, Molloy-Vaughan does also write 'football is actually a deeply flawed way of expressing yourself politically... [its] oppositional nature means you have guaranteed swathes ready to disagree with you no matter what you say, for tribal reasons.'

DJW

FREE

3-month trial subscription to the *Socialist Standard*



For more details about The Socialist Party, or to request a 3-month trial subscription to the *Socialist Standard*, please complete and return this form to **52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN.**

☐ Please send me an info pack

☐ Please send me a trial subscription to the *Socialist Standard*.

Name.....

Address.....

.....

.....

.....

Postcode.....



Voice from the Back

Hungry kids in the USA

Poverty is usually associated with countries in Africa and Asia not the highly developed USA, but here are the facts. 'about 16 million kids relied on the US government supplemental nutrition assistance program according to census bureau data released Wednesday, up from 15.6 million a year earlier' (*Huffington Post*, 28 January). Capitalism is a world-wide system and it has world-wide problems.

Kobani carnage

'The Kurdish forces' unexpected victory in this north Syrian town marked a huge strategic and propaganda loss for Isis, which once seemed unstoppable in their rampage across the region' (*Observer*, 1 February). There is no sense of triumph for these troops as Kobani is completely destroyed. Thousands massacred, all that remains is a bombed-out shell. In the yawning craters left by US air strikes buildings have vanished during months of heavy shelling. One side street is blocked by the bodies of Isis fighters, rotting where they fell – a pile of bones marked only by a foul smell. This is the inevitable product of capitalism's rivalries.

An obvious statement

It hardly needed a high-powered business survey to tell us the following. 'Big UK firms face a 'crisis of trust' and the next government must prioritise better ethics, a lobby group has said. In a survey, the Forum of Private Business (FPB) found that over three-quarters of respondents think big firms put profits before ethical standards' (*BBC News*, 9 February). Tax avoidance, treatment of suppliers, and late payment were all areas of concern we can easily understand that the poll of 2,000 people found, but business putting profits before ethics? Wow, what a surprise!

A strange communism

According to the Hurun Global Rich List 2015 the world now has a record 2,089 billionaires – and for the first time, India



has more of them than Britain or Russia. 'The list charts every dollar billionaire currently living in the world. It shows an additional 222 billionaires were created last year, almost a third of whom were in China. The US still holds the crown for most mega-wealthy residents, at 537. But China conditions are not far behind with 430, having acquired 72 new billionaires in 2014' (*Daily Telegraph*, 5 February). Somewhat comically the Chinese government still claims to be communist.

Crime and capitalism

TV programmes and the national press are fond of depicting the police as dealing successfully with the problem of crime, alas that is a complete fallacy. The advent of cheap heroin in Chicago has led to an increase in crime undreamt of by Al Capone and his contemporaries. 'In the 1920s, 227 gangsters were said to have been killed in the city in the space of four years. Last year there were 424 murders in Chicago, most of them said to be gang-related' (*Times*, 9 February), an increase of almost double in a quarter of the time. Some progress.

Profit and pollution

Details released at the annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science show that about eight million tonnes of plastic waste find their way into the world's oceans each year. 'The new study is said to be the best effort yet to quantify just how much of this debris is being dumped, blown or simply washed out to sea. Eight million tonnes is like covering an area 34 times the size of New York's Manhattan Island to ankle depth' (*BBC News*, 12 February). In the battle between profit and pollution there is a clear winner.

Desperate workers

According to the UN at least 300 migrants are feared to have drowned after attempting to cross the Mediterranean from North Africa this week in rough seas. 'UNHCR official Vincent Cochetel said it was a 'tragedy on an enormous scale'. Survivors brought to the Italian island of Lampedusa said they were forced to risk the bad weather on ill-equipped vessels by human traffickers in Libya' (*BBC News*, 11 February). Desperate workers are prepared to take enormous risks just to get a job.

A fortune in stamps

Capitalism is a crazy system that can condemn working men and women and their families to starvation for the want of a few pounds while this madness occurs. 'a few stamps which lay together in a cigar box in a dusty attic for a century are set to fetch £250,000 when next auctioned' (*Sunday Express*, 8 February). Scraps of paper worth more than human existence. Crazy.



This 1885 Swedish stamp was a one-off printing error, yellow instead of green. In 1996 it fetched \$2.3 million.

FREE LUNCH

